

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04

SIL-01 /068 W

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O 241524Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4604

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 1241

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, MPOL, AR

SUBJECT: KEY MEETING PRODUCES NO SOLUTIONS

REF: BUENOS AIRES 1224

1. SUMMARY: MEETING YESTERDAY (SEE REFTTEL) APPARENTLY WENT BADLY, WITH MRS. PERON GIVING UNHAPPY PERONIST DELEGATION NO SATISFACTION. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER DISSATISFACTION AMONG PERONIST LABOR DEPUTIES AND HERETOFORE VERTICALISTAS IN CONGRESS WILL PERSUADE THEM TO SUPPORT MOVE TO DECLARE MRS. PERON INCOMPETENT WHEN (AND IF) CONGRESS CONVENES TOMORROW AFTERNOON. EVENTS LEADING UP TO YESTERDAY'S MEETING PRODUCED NEAR TOTAL FRACTURING OF PERONIST PARTY AND FURTHER IRRITATION IN ARMED FORCES. END SUMMARY.

2. PERONIST DELEGATION OF TEN, INCLUDING SENATORS LUDER AND ROMERO, LABOR LEADERS WIMER PAPAGNO AND SMITH AND PARTY SECRETARY GEN MANUAL TORRES, MET WITH MRS. PERON FOR TWO HOURS LAST EVENING (FEB 23). FOLLOWING MEETING, PRESIDENTIAL PRESS OFFICE ISSUED JEJUNE STATEMENT TO EFFECT BULK OF MEETING HAD BEEN TAKEN UP BY PRESIDENT'S EXPOSITION OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROGRAMS. THIS OBVIOUSLY FALSE. WITH EXCEPTION OF WIMER, WHO SAID
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DELEGATES HAD EXPRESSED CONCERNS AND PROVIDED PRESIDENT

WITH THEIR OWN ANALYSIS OF SITUATION, DELEGATES REFUSED TO COMMENT TO PRESS AS THEY DEPARTED. NEESMEN WHO WERE ABLE TO TALK PRIVATELY WITH SEVERAL DELEGATES LATER ON IN EVENING, HOWEVER, REPORTED THEM TO BE PESSIMISTIC AS TO OUTCOME. THEY HAD, DELEGATES CONFIRMED, SPOKEN CLEARLY TO PRESIDENT. THEY HAD MADE EXPECTED DEMANDS--I.E. OUSTER OF JULIO GONZALEZ AND OTHER MEMBERS OF "PALACE ENTOURAGE," CABINET SHIFTS AND CHANGE IN POLICIES--AND HAD WARNED PRESIDENT THAT COUP WAS IMMINENT UNLESS SHE HEEDED THEIR DEMANDS. ACCORDING TO PRESS VERSIONS, MRS. PERON LISTENED BUT MADE NO RESPONSE. ONE REPORT HAS IT THAT SHE WAS HIGHLY EMOTIONAL AND SEVERAL TIMES NEAR TEARS. PRESS REPORTS ALSO INDICATE SHE REFERRED TO JOSE BAEZ (PARTY'S SECOND VICE PRESIDENT, WHO WAS ABSENT) AS "TRAITOR"-- WHICH DEEPENED CONVICTION OF DELEGATES THAT THEIR DEMARCH NOT LIKELY TO PRODUCE CHANGE OF ATTITUDE ON HER PART.

3. LABOR'S CCC NOW SCHEDULED TO MEET ABOUT NOON TODAY. IN EFFECT, IT WILL DECIDE HOW TO RESPOND TO MRS. PERON'S LACK OF RESPONSE. KEY QUESTION NOW IS WHETHER HER UNRESPONSIVENESS WILL SWING OVER ENOUGH PERONISTS IN CONGRESS SO THAT CHAMBER'S MOVE TO DECLARE HER INCOMPETENT CAN GO AHEAD WHEN CONGRESS CONVENES (IF IT DOES) TOMORROW, FEB 25. MANY OBSERVERS BELIEVE THIS IS NOW VIRTUALLY ONLY THING WHICH MIGHT (AND ONLY MIGHT) HOLD OFF A COUPLE.

4. WHILE SEVERAL EVENTS MAY HAVE BEEN REPORTED BY FBIS, DEVELOPMENTS LEADING UP TO YESTERDAY'S MEETING ARE GIVEN BELOW IN ROUGH CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER FOR CONVENIENCE OF ANALYSTS IN DEPT.

5. FOCUS OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY FEB 19 AND 20 WAS SERIES OF MEETINGS ATTENDED BY LABOR LEADERS AND KEY PERONIST CONGRESSIONAL FIGURES, INCLUDING SEN LUDER. PURPOSE OF MEETINGS WAS TO AGREE ON A STRATEGY FOR CONFRONTING MRS. PERON AND HER "ENTOURAGE." ACCORDING TO EMBASSY SOURCES, OPINION WAS EVENLY DIVIDED BETWEEN THOSE WHO ARGUED THAT TIME HAD COME TO OUST MRS. PERON IN ORDER TO SAVE PERONISM AND CONSTITUTIONALISM AND THOSE WHO BELIEVED IT ADVISABLE TO KEEP HER IN OFFICE AS FIGUREHEAD (OR ON EXTENDED LEAVE)
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PROVIDED SHE AGREED TO DUMP ENTOURAGE AND CHANGE POLICIES. BY AFTERNOON OF FEB 20, IT APPEARED LATTER POSITION ENJOYED SUPPORT OF THE MAJORITY, THOUGH MOST BELIEVED MRS. PERON WOULD NOT RPT NOT ACCEPT THESE DEMANDS, THUS FORCING DISSIDENTS INTO POSITION OF OPEN OPPOSITION TO HER.

6. AT START OF MEETINGS FEB 19 THE ULTRA-VERTICALISTA MEMBERS OF THE JUSTICIALISTA COUNCIL, COMPOSED MOSTLY OF

REPS OF THE PARTY'S FEMINIST BRANCH, WERE IN ATTENDANCE. AFTER FINDING THEMSELVES ISOLATED IN THEIR SUPPORT OF MRS. PERON, THEY WALKED OUT IN A HUFF. IN CLUMSY ATTEMPT TO COUNTER THE OVERWHELMING OPPOSITION TO MRS. PERON IN LABOR AND PARTY CIRCLES, THEY THEN ISSUED STATEMENT IN NAME OF ENTIRE COUNCIL AFFIRMING ITS "UNSWERVING LOYALTY TO MRS. PERON AND HER GOVT." ON FEB 20, THEY RESIGNED FROM COUNCIL CHARGING THAT BODY NO LONGER REPRESENTATIVE OF PERONISM AND WAS DISLOYAL TO MRS. PERON. AT SAME TIME, A KEY ULTRA-VERTICALISTA IN ADMINISTRATION, SPORTS AND TOURISM SEC ADOLFO CESAR PHILLIPEAUX, RESIGNED HIS POST, CHARGING THAT LABOR LEADER JOSE BAEZ, THE COUNCIL'S SECOND VICE PRES, WAS "A TRAITOR TO PERONISM." THESE STATEMENTS WERE GIVEN EXTENSIVE AND REPEATED COVERAGE BY GOVT-CONTROLLED RADIO AND TV, INDICATING THAT MRS. PERON BACKED THEM. CONFIRMATION OF THIS CAME WHEN MRS. PERON, WARNED BY ULTRAS OF DISSIDENT TACTICS, ANNOUNCED SHE WAS CONFIRMING ALL HER MINISTERS AND STATE SECRETARIES IN THEIR PRESENT POSITIONS.

7. ENRAGED BY THESE ATTACKS, LABOR LEADERS AND THEIR CONGRESSIONAL ALLIES IMMEDIATELY ISSUED EFFUSIVE STATEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF BAEZ. THEY ALSO SENT ROGELIO PAPAGNO OF THE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS UNION TO THE CASA ROSADA TO DEMAND A MEETING WITH MRS. PERON. THE DEMAND WAS AGREED TO AND MEETING WAS SET FOR 5 PM FEB 23.

8. LABOR LEADERS AT SAME TIME CALLED FOR CONVOCATION OF CCC (CENTRAL CONFEDERATED COMMITTEE) FOR FEB 24 TO "ANALYZE" RESPONSE THEY MIGHT GET FROM MRS. PERON IN MEETING ON FEB 23. THIS WAS BELIEVED TO BE LABOR'S WAY OF UNDERLINING ITS INTENTION TO VIGOROUSLY PURSUE STRUGGLE IF NOT SATISFIED WITH MRS. PERON'S RESPONSE.
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ACTION ARA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4605

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 1241

9. THERE YET MAY BE SOME WAVERING IN RANKS OF THOSE PERONISTS OPPOSED TO MRS. PERON. HOWEVER, LABATT SOURCE REPORTS THAT SOCIAL WELFARE MIN DEMARCO, A HERETOFORE STAUNCH VERTICALISTA, IS TELLING HIS FRIENDS IN LABOR "IT'S ALL OVER FOR MRS. PERON." OTHER SOURCES ADD THAT FACT LORENZO MIGUEL, CASILDO HERRERAS, AND RAUL LASTIRI HAVE LEFT TOWN, THE LATTER INCOGNITO TO GO ABROAD, INDICATES THEY SEE TREND OF EVENTS AND ARE ABANDONING SHIP.

10. MEANWHILE, ARMY CINC VIDELA HELD 12 HOUR MEETING WITH KEY GENERALS FEB 20. NO DETAILS OF CONVERSATION HAVE YET LEAKED OUT AND REPORTERS COVERING STORY SAY PARTICIPANTS APPARENTLY SWORN TO SECRECY ON SUBSTANCE OF DISCUSSIONS. HOWEVER, IT IS PUBLICLY KNOWN THAT ARMY, NAVY AND AIR FORCE CINCS WERE FURIOUS OVER THE CLOSING OF CONGRESS, WHICH HAD BEFORE IT SEVERAL BILLS OF VITAL INTEREST TO MILITARY IN ADDITION TO BUDGET. CINCS ALSO UPSET THAT MRS. PERON, WITH GREAT FANFARE, INVITED THEM TO MEETING OF INTERNAL SECURITY COMMITTEE ON FEB 18, OSTENSIBLY TO DISCUSS ANTI-SUBVERSION CAMPAIGN, THEN STRESSED THEIR ATTENDANCE IN SPEECH IMMEDIATELY AFTER IN WHICH SHE ANNOUNCED THAT SHE WOULD NOT SEEK RE-ELECTION. CLEARLY, SHE TRICKED THEM TO COME TO MEETING AND THEN USED THEIR PRESENCE TO SUGGEST THEY
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STAND BEHIND HER. FINAL IRRITANT FOR MILITARY WAS STATEMENT IN FEB 18 SPEECH TO EFFECT THAT SHE COULD NOT RESIGN BECAUSE TO DO SO WOULD BE TO TURN COUNTRY OVER TO MARXISM. CINCS SEE THIS AS SLAP AT THEIR OWN ROLE AS DEFENDERS OF COUNTRY AGAINST SUBVERSION. PERONIST PARTY ALSO TOOK HER REMARK VERY POORLY. PRO-PERONIST MAYORIA ON FEB 21 NOTED SACRASTICALLY THAT APPARENTLY ISABEL COUNTED FOR EVERYTHING, PARTY FOR NOTHING, IN DIRECT CONTRADICTION TO GEN PERON'S ADMONITIONS. PERONISM,

CONCLUDED MAYORIA, WAS IN DANGER OF TOTAL FRAGMENTATION.

11. COMMENT: MRS. PERON'S GOVT NOW APPERS TO BE IN BLIND ALLEY. APART FROM INTRAPARTY STRUGGLE, WHICH SEEMS TO HAVE REACHED POINT OF NO RETURN, THE GOA'S CONTRADICTORY STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS--E.G. CLOSING CONGRESS, THEN OPENING IT AGAIN; CALLING FOR A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AS GOVT'S PRIORITY TASK BEFORE ELECTIONS CAN BE HELD, THEN SETTING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS FOR DEC 12 AND INDICATING THAT CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY IS MATTER FOR CONGRESS TO DECIDE--GIVE IMPRESSION THAT ADMINISTRATION IS RUDDERLESS, AT END OF ITS ROPE AND HASN'T A CLUE AS TO WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT. THERE IS NOW SEVERE PRESSURE FROM THE KEY ELEMENTS OF HER OWN PARTY TO OUST HER, AND RISING SENTIMENT IN THE MILITARY TO END HER TENURE. MANY OBSERVERS BELIEVE SHE SOULD PREFER TO BE OUSTED BY MILITARY COUP RATHER THAN BY CONSTITUTIONAL MEANS. RICARDO BALBIN OF UCR, FOR EXAMPLE, TOLD MEWSMEN FEB 19, "GOVT MAY NOT WANT A COUP BUT IT SEEMS TO BE DOING EVERY-THING IN ITS POWER TO BRING ONE ABOUT."
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